

# SI:AM | Nebraska Sold Out Its Football Stadium. For a Volleyball Match.

Plus, the big-name college football programs with questions at quarterback.

DAN GARTLAND • 7 HOURS AGO



In this story:

**N** NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS

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Good morning, I'm Dan Gartland. I meant to mention this earlier, but if you haven't watched the HBO documentary *B.S. High* on the Bishop Sycamore football scam, I can't recommend it highly enough. ([Jimmy Traina wrote a review of the film last week.](#))

*In today's SI:AM:*

 [The key to Jalen Hurts's success](#)

 [The Colts' unforced error](#)

 [College football QB battles](#)

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## Nebraska dreams big

A world record could very well be set tonight in Lincoln, Neb.

**The Nebraska women's volleyball team** is set to play a match tonight at Memorial Stadium, the school's football stadium, that will shatter the NCAA volleyball attendance record and has a chance to become the most attended women's sporting event in history—perhaps attracting more than 91,000 people.

It's being billed as "Volleyball Day in Nebraska" and was conceived as a response to Wisconsin breaking the NCAA volleyball attendance record last year with 16,833 fans. The only venue on campus at Nebraska capable of holding more people than that is the football stadium, so the school is dreaming big.

"Wisconsin, being as competitive as they are, went and took one of our attendance records away," **Cornhuskers coach John Cook told USA Today**. "So we're like, 'How are we going to get it back?'"

When tickets went on sale in April, the school sold its full allotment of 82,900 **in just three days**. With standing-room tickets and floor seating, **the school is expecting north of 90,000 fans in the stadium**. Nebraska athletic director Trev Alberts told *USA Today* that he believes the final attendance figure will be **closer to 95,000**. (Here's [what the volleyball court looks like](#) in the massive expanse of the football stadium.)

A crowd of that size would be not just the largest in NCAA volleyball history and not just the largest for a women's sporting event in the United States. It would break **the world record for attendance at a women's sporting event**. The U.S. record is 90,185 for the 1999 Women's World Cup final at the Rose Bowl. **The world record is 91,648** for the Barcelona vs. Wolfsburg Women's Champions League semifinal **in April 2022**.

So how did Nebraska get to the point that it could sell out a football stadium for a volleyball match? Well, **the Cornhuskers are one of the nation's most dominant volleyball programs**. They've qualified for the NCAA tournament every year since 1982 and have won five national championships. **They've sold out their last 306 matches at their 8,000-seat home arena**, a streak that stretches back more than 20 years. Combine that with Nebraskans' fervent support for the Cornhuskers (as evidenced by the football team's 60-year sellout streak) and the conditions were right for a special night in Lincoln.



“In our state, people just really enjoy big events,” **Alberts told *The Athletic***. “So I get excited thinking about the energy in our stadium and doing something special for these young women. Doing something special for our fans. Doing something special for our entire state.”

Volleyball Day in Nebraska will be an all-day event, beginning with a matchup of Division II schools (Nebraska-Kearney vs. Wayne State) before the Huskers face Nebraska-Omaha in the main event. After the match, country singer Scotty McCreery will perform.

Nebraska took a big chance in scheduling this event. **Cook, who’s coached at the school since 2000, was initially hesitant to book the match in the football stadium, according to ESPN**. But the quick sellout proved that those concerns were unwarranted. The only other potential issue was the weather. Rain would have forced the match to move to the indoor arena and scuttled the world record attempt, but the current weather forecast calls for comfortable temperatures and no chance of rain. It’s setting up to be a memorable night in Lincoln—and, perhaps, a record-setting one.

## The best of *Sports Illustrated*

- After his breakout 2022, Jalen Hurts is poised for a repeat performance thanks to the continuity of the Eagles’ coaching staff, something he lacked early in his career. **Hurts told Greg Bishop that consistency was “maybe the most important” part of his success last season.**
- Big-name programs like Alabama and Ohio State enter the college football season with uncertain quarterback situations. **Richard Johnson looks at all the teams with the biggest question marks under center.**
- By letting the Jonathan Taylor saga drag out, **Colts owner Jim Irsay is adding unnecessary drama to a locker room** already trying to come together under a new head coach, Conor Orr argues.
- The Yankees’ decision to cut Josh Donaldson should be **a cautionary tale about putting too much stock in exit velocity, Tom Verducci writes.**
- Bob Harig breaks down the final U.S. Ryder Cup squad, **which features some surprising captain’s picks by Zach Johnson.**
- With NFL roster cuts now finalized, **Jennifer Piacenti has a list of 10 cuts with fantasy football implications.**
- **Venus Williams was eliminated from the U.S. Open** by unranked qualifier Greet Minnen.
- The Angels are essentially **throwing in the towel on this season by waiving five players,** including several acquired at the trade deadline.
- Jaguars coach Doug Pederson **cut his own son from the team’s roster.**

# The top five...

... things I saw last night:

5. Mookie Betts's **36th homer of the season**, setting a new career high.
4. Mariners pitcher **Luke Weaver's sliding play**.
3. Blue Jays rookie **Davis Schneider's sixth home run** in his first 13 games. He has a bonkers 1.421 OPS after posting an .835 OPS in six minor league seasons.
2. Bryce Harper's **116-mph laser-beam home run**.
1. **Austin Slater's diving catch** for the final out of the eighth inning to keep Alex Cobb's no-hitter alive. **Cobb lost the no-hit bid** with two outs in the ninth, though.

## SIQ

Hall of Fame NBA center Robert Parish, who turns 70 today, attended which small college that now competes in Division III?

- Centenary
- Warren Wilson
- John Carroll
- Washington & Jefferson

**Yesterday's SIQ:** Which country beat England in a cricket match Aug. 29, 1882, leading one newspaper to declare "the death of English cricket" and leading to the establishment of a series—considered the sport's greatest rivalry—that has been contested every two years since?

- Ireland
- Australia
- South Africa
- India

**Answer:** Australia. The Aussies defeated England in London in what was considered a massive upset as the English bats fell silent late in the match. The disappointing result led a British newspaper, *The Sporting Times*, to publish a mock obituary for English cricket. “The body will be cremated and the ashes taken back to Australia,” it read.

Soon afterward, an English team set off to tour Australia, with captain Ivo Bligh declaring that he intended to reclaim the ashes and bring them back to England. While in Australia on that trip, Bligh was given a small terra-cotta urn as a nod to the ashes metaphor. The urn (filled with actual ashes said to be the burned remains of a piece of equipment used in the 1882 match) became the trophy Australia and England compete for in their rivalry series, known as The Ashes. The series is contested every two years, alternating between England and Australia. England hosted this year, with the five-match series ending in a draw, so Australia retained the trophy. The Aussies have held it since defeating England in 2017.